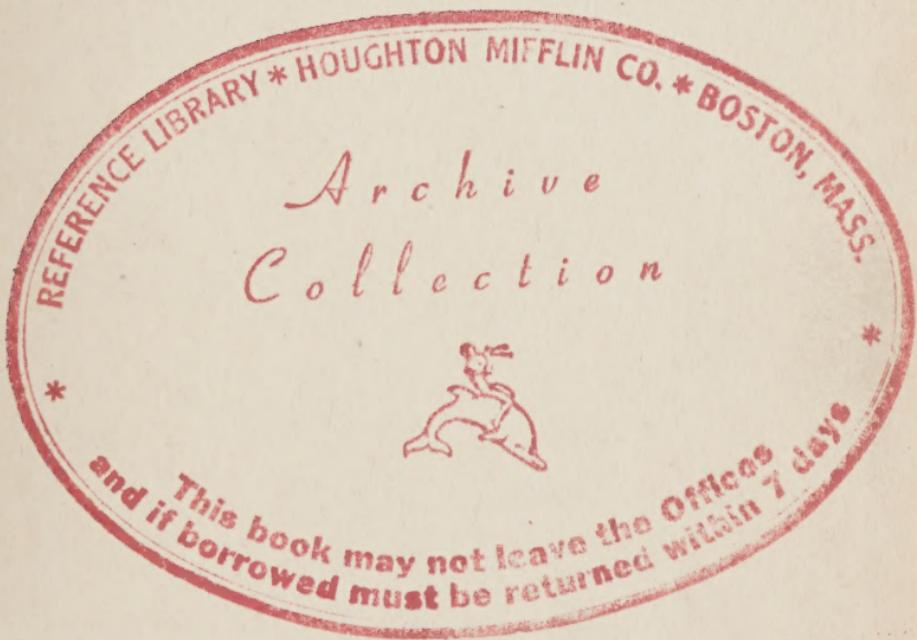
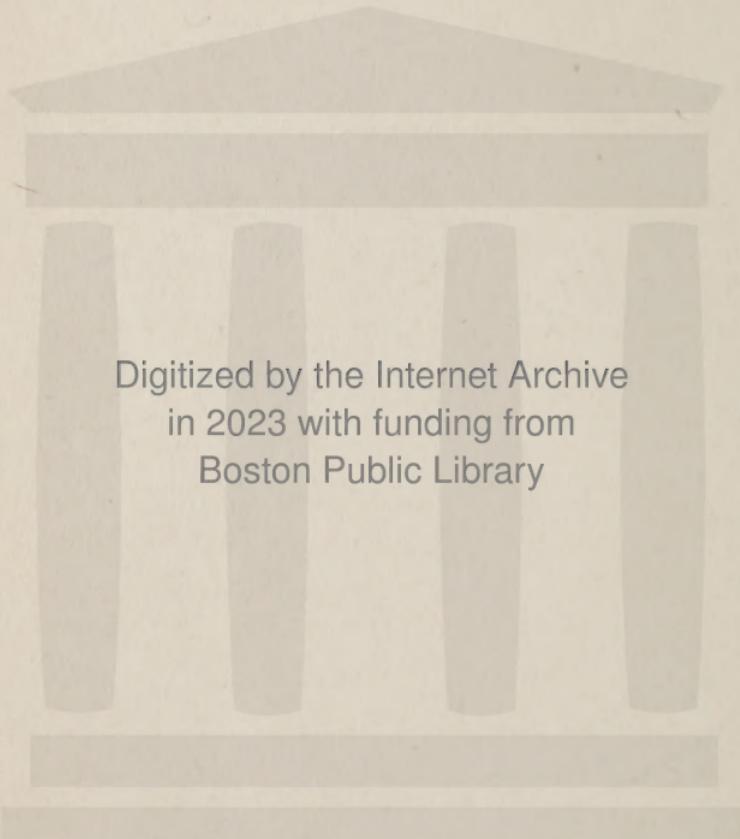


Kinfolks
By Ann Cobb





Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2023 with funding from
Boston Public Library

KINFOLKS

KENTUCKY MOUNTAIN RHYMES

KINFOLKS

KENTUCKY MOUNTAIN RHYMES

BY

ANN COBB



BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge

1922

COPYRIGHT, 1922, BY ANN COBB

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

The Riverside Press

CAMBRIDGE · MASSACHUSETTS

PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

TO
MAY STONE
AND
LUCY FURMAN

NOTE

THIRTEEN of these poems were first published in the *Outlook*. They are: "Dulcimer over the Fireboard," "The Cripple-Woman," "Old Christmas Eve," "Up Carr Creek," "A Mountain Seaman," "The Mail Boy," "The Gourd Horn," "The Widow Man," "Kivers," "Hospitality," "The Black Sunbonnet," "Ole Bald Eagle," and "Under the Sycamore Tree."

CONTENTS

“DULCIMER OVER THE FIREBOARD”	3
UP CARR CREEK	5
THE GOURD HORN	6
KIVERS	7
THE WIDOW MAN	9
THE HOLLY TREE	10
A TIDE ON TROUBLESOME CREEK	11
THE BLACK SUNBONNET	12
THE MAIL BOY	13
AN “OLD REG’LAR” PREACHER	14
THE POPPET-DOLL	16
“OLE BALD EAGLE”	17
“HANTS”	19
THE SILVER-PIECE	21
HOMESICK IN TEXAS	23
THE DOCTOR-WOMAN	24
CATFISH HOLE	26
APPLE TREES	28
THE POSSUM-HUNTERS	30
MAKING SORGHUM	31
THE BOY	33
GRANNY GOES ELECTIONEERING	35
A MOTOR CYCLE PASSES DOWN HICKORY CREEK	37

CONTENTS

FIRE	38
HORSE-SWAPPING	39
GRAVE-HOUSES	41
THE NEW GENERATION	42
A TEAMSTER EMERITUS	44
HOSPITALITY	47
THE NEWEST BOY	48
GRANDSIR' VISITS THE KINDERGARTEN	50
TURNED AWAY	51
THE CHRISTMAS TREE UP SCUDDY	52
NEW CHRISTMAS	55
THE CRIPPLE-WOMAN	56
OLD CHRISTMAS EVE	57
A MOUNTAIN SEAMAN	59
THE FIGHTINGEST KIN	61
BRITISH LADY	63
THE QUILTING	65
SID'S MOTHER	67
BUD'S MOTHER	68
BALLADS IN PRISON	71
UNCLE NATHE ON THE H. C. L.	73
GINSENG	75
THE LOW-GROUND OF SORROW	78
THE INFARE	79
UNDER THE SYCAMORE TREE	81

KINFOLKS
KENTUCKY MOUNTAIN RHYMES

KINFOLKS

KENTUCKY MOUNTAIN RHYMES

• •

“DULCIMER OVER THE FIREBOARD”¹

DULCIMER over the fireboard, hanging sence allus-ago,
Strangers are wishful to buy you, and make of your
music a show:

Not while the selling a heart for a gold-piece is reckoned
a sin,

Not while the word of old Enoch still stands as a law
for his kin.

Grandsir' he made you in Breathitt, the while he was
courting a maid.

Nary a one of his offsprings, right down to the least one,
but played,

Played and passed on to his people, with only the song
to abide,

Long-ago songs of Old England, whose lads we 're now
fighting beside.

¹ For generations the dulcimer has been the musical instrument of the Kentucky mountains. To the accompaniment of its plaintive drone are sung the ancient English and Scottish ballads still handed down from father to son.

KINFOLKS

There you 'll be hanging to greet him, when Jasper
comes home from the fight.

Nary a letter he 's writ us, but he 'll be a-coming, all
right.

Jasper 's the last of the Logans. Hit 's reason to think
that he 'll beat,

Beat and beget sons and daughters to sing the old songs at
his feet.

UP CARR CREEK

THE ways of the world are a-coming — up Cyarr!

Biled shirts and neckties,

Powder-pots and veils,

Pizen fotched-on liquor,

Doctor-pills, and ailments —

Hit 's a sight, all the brash that 's a-coming — up Cyarr!

The ways of the mountains are passing — up Cyarr!

Moonshine stills and manhood,

Gear to weave and spin,

Good old Reg'lar Baptists

Preaching hell for sin.

Far'well to the old ways a-passing — up Cyarr!

The ways of the world will be holding — up Cyarr!

Sorry ways, the old ways,

They 've a call to go.

Only, when you 're grave-bound,

Changing 's allus slow.

Old folks will bide by the old ways — up Cyarr.

THE GOURD HORN

NOWADAYS-FOLKS can't blow that horn;
Blow and they puff, puff and they blow,
And swar the dad-busted thing won't go.
Gee-oh, I've blowed hit sence I was born.

When I was a chunk of a lad with a hoe,
Working the crap and shirking the crap,
The sun-ball a-scorching me ready to drap,
Gee-oh, I longed for that horn to blow!

Little old Maw could make hit sing,
Sing of the corn pone and vinegar pie,
And the bed where a pampered boy could lie.
Gee-oh, hit's long-ago days that cling!

KIVERS¹

YES, I 've sev'ral kivers you can see;
'Light and hitch your beastie in the shade!
I don't foller weaving now so free,
And all my purtiest ones my forebears made.
Home-dyed colors kindly meller down
Better than these new fotched-on ones from town.

I ricollect my granny at the loom
Weaving that blue one yonder on the bed.
She put the shuttle by and laid in tomb.
Her word was I could claim hit when I wed.
“Flower of Edinboro” was hits name,
Betokening the land from which she came.

Nary a daughter have I for the boon,
But there 's my son's wife from the level land,
She took the night with us at harvest-moon—
A comely, fair young maid, with loving hand.
I gave her three—“Sunrise” and “Trailing Vine”
And “Young Man's Fancy.” She admired 'em fine.

¹ In the Kentucky mountains for generations the chief outlet for the artistic sense of the women has been the weaving of woolen coverlets, many of them of elaborate pattern and rare beauty.

KINFOLKS

That green one mostly wrops around the bread;
“ Tennessee Lace ” I take to ride behind.
Hither and yon right smart of them have fled.
Inside the chest I keep my choicest kind —
“ Pine-Bloom ” and “ St. Ann’s Robe ” (of hickory
brown),
“ Star of the East ” (that yaller ’s fading down!).

The Rose? I wove hit courting, long ago —
Not Simon, though he ’s proper kind of heart —
His name was Hugh — the fever laid him low —
I allus keep that kiver set apart.
“ Rose of the Valley,” he would laugh and say,
“ The kiver ’s favoring your face to-day ! ”

THE WIDOW MAN

I 'VE brought you my three babes, that lost their Maw a
year ago.

Folks claim you are right women, larned and fitten for
to know

What 's best for babes, and how to raise 'em into Chris-
tian men.

I 've growed afeard to leave 'em lest the house ketch
fire again.

For though I counsel 'em a sight each time I ride to
town,

Little chaps get so sleepy-headed when the dark comes
down !

A body can make shift somehow to feed 'em up of days,
But nights they need a woman-person's foolish little ways
(When all of t' other young things are tucked under
mammy's wing,

And the hoot-owls and the frogs and all the lonesome
critters sing).

You 'll baby 'em a little when you get 'em in their gown ?
Little chaps get so sleepy-headed when the dark comes
down !

THE HOLLY TREE

“ Of all the trees that are in the wood,
the holly bears the crown.”

Old Carol

HIT 's cur'ous all a body sees
A-riding by his lone,
Outlandish birds, and beastes' prints,
And traces in a stone.

As I was crossing Powder Gap,
I spied a holly tree,
Amid the lonesome pines, hit was
A wonderment to see.

Hits prickly leaves stood out so proud
To bear the scarlet bloom.
Seemed like the other trees bowed low
To give the holly room.

I've wandered in the level land
And crossed the old salt sea,
But there 's no furrin sight to match
A full-grown holly tree.

A TIDE ON TROUBLESOME CREEK

SHAKE the boys up, Mallie, and send 'em down-along,
I 'll get out the critters, and tie the foot-log strong.

Whoa thar, Judy! Scairt, eh? rampaging up and down!
Think your master 'd leave his purty nag to drown?

Judging by the squawking, the chickens must be dry.
Roust out them Durocs, boys, — the water 's round
the sty.

Far'well, bottom-land, with all the garden-truck !
Allus told you hillside 's the only place for luck.

Dad-burn that ole foot-log ! We 'll have to build a
bridge.
Gee-oh, boys, let 's quit hit, and settle on the ridge.

THE BLACK SUNBONNET

CYNTHY, don't quarrel at your granny's sunbonnet,
Hit's like a well-tried friend.
Allus did suit this old head, kindly,
And will, too, till the end.

Never would enjoy myself at funeral occasions
In any other gear.

'Way back yander when I was raised they wore 'em
The same, year atter year.

I don't quarrel at the sorry contraptions
Maids wear nowadays;
Cover your face with a posy-basket,
But leave me my old ways.

THE MAIL BOY

LONESOMEST part of the road I foller,
Just at the edge of dark,
Little old frogs in a swampy holler
Allus begin to bark.

Sensible critters are gone to their sleeping —
Jay-birds and chickens and hogs —
Quare how it jest sets your innards a-creeping —
Nothing but little ole frogs !

Sets you to thinking of ghostes and dying —
Everything sorry and sad.
Gee ! but I go past that holler a-flying !
Cain't even *shoot* straight, by gad !

AN “OLD REG'LAR” PREACHER

O LORD, look down upon the souls
That 's mustered round the trees,
And bring them back from foreign ways,
Repentant to their knees.
Skeercely a one but what his heart
Is set to disbelief.
That opposite old way, like what
Deceased our Mother Eve.

The good, old-time religion, Lord,
Hain't what it uster be;
Quare level-landers wander in
To make a sport of me.
Right within gunshot of my voice
The lads are courting gay,
And swapping nags, and fiddling, too,
Upon Thy Holy Day!

Full forty years since my Election
Day has traveled by,

AN OLD REG'LAR PREACHER

And now this body 's dwindling down—
I 'm aiming for to die.
My pilgrimage is almost done,
My soul will find release,
And sweep hits way triumphant through
The pearly gates of peace.

Lengthen the brittle thread of life,
That I may garner in
Some silly sheep that 's lost amidst
The thorny paths of sin.
Poor, feeble stock, us humans be,
Unfit for courts above.
O Lord, dig round the roots of our hearts
With the mattock of Thy love.

THE POPPET-DOLL

DADDY aims to cyarve out a poppet for his babe.

All the long day

He must fare away

Putting in a corn-crap, perviding for his babe.

Lonesome for a human to kindly help you play?

Nary little brother,

Nary loving mother.

Poppet might *look* human, and shorten up the day.

“OLE BALD EAGLE”

(*A Dance Tune*)

“BACK an’ forth across the floor — daylight ’s gone!”

Gabriel scraping his ole gourd fiddle,
Clear Creek running a set,
Preacher he reckons that ole man Satan
Aims ter fill up his net.
I ’m of the notion they ’re stouter Christians,
Dancing away their fret.

“Watch Miss Maggie sail across — daylight ’s gone!”

Wyatts hev allus been master fiddlers,
Ready to play their part.
Many ’s the couple I ’ve holpen courting
Out of a joyous heart.
Now little maids call me Ole Bald Eagle,
Jest to be gayly and smart.

“Ole Bald Eagle sails across — daylight ’s gone!”

Now I can set in the chimley corner —
Nary a frolic I fail —

KINFOLKS

Jest pine-blank like the ole bald eagle
Watching the young birds sail,
Wishing they 'll happen on pretty weather
Out on the Eagle Trail.

“HANTS”

LAST Friday week ole Brother Singleton,
From out Virginny way a piece, rid in
To take the night with us. Maw flaxed about
And cooked him up a snack of meat and bread.
Then atter he had eat, they sat around
A-swapping hant tales—him and Granny Dale
And Uncle Nathe—till 'way up in the night.
The babes and Maw drapped off to sleep, but I
Jest wropped my head up in the kivers good
And listened at 'em tell. Hit were a sight!
We thought we had a right smart bit of hants,
But Gee-oh, boy! they shore looked puny 'side
Of ole man Singleton's. He told about
The headless hant that names yore day of doom,
The big, saft, woolly hant that leaps up in
Yore saddle, riding in the darksome woods,
And wrops hits arm all choky round yore neck.
Yes, and the hant that creeps from graveyards off,
To charm a man, and kneels down by the bed,
With candle in hits hand. I heared hit creep,

KINFOLKS

And lit right out of bed, and scrouged in close
To good ole Uncle Nathe, and made out like
I aimed to freeze, a-laying there alone.

Then ole man Singleton looked round and said,
“Hey, son, I’m getting dry with all the talk,—
Jest fetch the gourd here if hit’s setting nigh!”
I tuck the bucket down, and Gee-oh, boy!
The dag-gone thing had nary drap inside.

Our spring’s a right-smart piece above the house.
Dark had come down, and though the moon was high,
The sky was clamored, and ‘t was hiding out.
I clean outstripped the wind; but jest afore
I made the spring, there stood the snow-white hant
A-retching down hits gnarly arms at me.
I felt the chains about my feet, and fell.
And then . . . a great big voice came roaring out,
“Hold on there, son, wait on yore Uncle Nathe!”
And what you reckon? All the hant we seed
Was jest a leetle mite of dogwood-blow!

THE SILVER-PIECE

You women allus crave the ancient things—
Song-ballets, hant tales, chiny-ware and sich—
You might be pleased with yon silver-piece
My kin have kept a hundred years— and more—
Jedging by Seventeen-hundred-sixty-three.

So Lud means Louis in the Latin tongue?
From what I 've read about those Frenchy kings,
Lud did n't foller patterning his life
After that pious text you 've just read out !
I wonder did we get the silver-piece
Back when the Britishers and Frenchies fought
Yonside the Alleghenies, for the land ?
When young George Washington was mustering
Stout woodcraftmen to help ole Braddock out ?
We might. Virginians were king's men then,
And when the battling was going on
We Greys were like to come a-wand'ring round.

I was what Yankees called a “Johnny Reb,”
And fought clean through the war. Nary a wound

KINFOLKS

Was stout enough to rob me of my chance.
Yes, once I saw him plain — General Lee —
I've never had the words . . . He had the best
Countenance I've ever seen on a man's face.

I've foller'd farming ever sence the war.
Nature's the doctor for more scars than one.
Many's the tree or mountain-side I've seen
Healed o'er, or kivered up with greenery.
I've been a good Kentuckian many years,
But once you're born and raised Virginny ways,
There's but the one state for your homing thoughts.

Not but what Laurel Creek's a sightly spot
To pass the balance of your days in peace.
Plenty of bottom-land for garden truck,
Hillsides for corn, chickens and cows enough,
A pacing nag to ride in after mail —
And healthy too. Might be some days afore
My grandson gets the sword and silver-piece.

HOMESICK IN TEXAS

GRANDSIR' fell out of his cornfield and broke his neck.

(Snigger away; hit 's so !)

Farming the side of a cliff is like that — by heck !

I 've got a call to know.

Out here in Texas a feller 's no land to fight,

Nary a rock or slip.¹

Look at my cotton-yield thar — now hain't hit a sight ?

Strip after level strip ?

Wonderment takes me at times I 'd be turning back,

Back to that rocky hill.

Quare how for all of my riches I feel a lack

Only Ole Pine Top can fill.

¹ Land-slide.

THE DOCTOR-WOMAN

CLEAN to the holler's head I 've rid to-day,
Tending Bob Major's babe that just got burned.
He 's not bad off — plenty of healing salve
And keeping bed a spell will fetch him round.
Not like Dorindy's boy. . . . If anything
Could make a infidel of me, hit 's how
Parents will leave pore little simple babes,
Just big enough to trot, alone with Fire!

Reckon I have a knack for doctoring,
You might say I was borned and raised to hit;
Pore little Maw was allus puning round,
And only saved three young uns out of nine.
A stranger-lady argufied one time
I orter studied at a doctor-school
And been a regular. That 's not my view.
There 's just the one work for a woman-soul —
To win her man and bear him stalwart babes.
I 've done hit, too, — seven, and all alive.
You 'll notice most robustious talk 's put forth
By those that never found their proper man, —
Them fotched-on women, now, that runs the School,

THE DOCTOR-WOMAN

And speechifies on Voting, and don't own
A man amongst 'em all, — the way I see
Things is, a woman that hain't got the sense
To land a man, hain't got the sense to vote.

My doctoring? I just do common things,
Like fever, typhoid, and the breast-complaint,
Measles and mumps and sech-like children's ails;
And helping mothers when their time has come.
I never held with all these notions like
Curing the thrash with water from a shoe
Of some old stranger-man, or touching babes
By folks whose pappy died before their birth —
That 's pine-blank heathenish, and doless, too.
I steer 'em clear of sech, and give 'em teas
Made out of yarbs I 've dug and cyored myself.

Now that the railroad 's coming in so fast,
There 'll soon be cities full of doctor-men.
Jealous-hearted? Gee-oh, woman, no!
I 'll see some peace then, messing round the farm.
Quare when a body 's old the sight of time
Hit takes to do jest little pindling jobs.
And if the doctors feel a little strange,
And seem to crave my counsel, here I 'll be.

CATFISH HOLE

DREAMING dreams I 've been to-day of fishing in the creek :

Not here — there 's naught but minners here for little lads to seek.

Ole Beaver had a sightly spot above the water-mill,
Where me an' Dick an' Preacher's tribe could allus catch our fill.

Down by the shady willows we 'd take a red-bud pole,
An' roost out on a limber branch right over Catfish Hole.

Shiners were purty fish to see — flirting up in the sun,
They were n't so grand as catfish, but they made a sight of fun.

Red-eyes we 'd catch an' suckers too, an' pyeerches by the score,

Then Paw an' Doc would cast their seine an' bring in sev'ral more.

The seine had meshes proper wide to let small sizes out.
This dynamiting generation blows 'em all about !

CATFISH HOLE

We rambled back there — me an' Dick — when we 'd
been long years wed.

Saw-mills had rooted out the trees, an' all the creek
was dead.

New ways are diff'ring ways from ours, hit mought
be better so;

The fish are gone from Beaver Creek is all we old uns
know.

APPLE TREES

WE planted apple trees to-day,
Little old Sam and I,
That valley hollow aims to be
An orchard by and by.

We set out all our favorites,
Several of each kind,
Virginia beauties, Romans, too,
Were most to Sammy's mind.

I 'm not so choosy — Rusty Coats,
Bellflower and Early Sweet ;
And Winesaps, for their spicy juice,
Are mighty hard to beat.

Down in the richest spot of all
We planted Granny's Tree,
The Maiden Blush, an old-time kind
That you 'll not often see.

When I was just a courting lad,
Our choicest place to meet

APPLE TREES

Was under an old Maiden Blush,
Upon a puncheon seat.

One evening when the apple bloom
Was floating far and wide,
She gave her blushing promise there,
To be my wedded bride.

• • • •
One evening when the withered leaves
Were whirling through the air,
Beneath the tree we dug a grave,
And left her sleeping there.

That ancient tree is blasted now,
Hits blooming days are o'er,
But allus there 'll be shoots and grafts
To yield the earth hits store.

No valiant deeds I 've wrought below,
My coming kin to please,
I aim to be remembered by
My sightly apple trees.

THE POSSUM-HUNTERS

WHISTLE up the hounds and root out the axe,
Possum up a tree takes several hacks,
Gee-oh, boys! Hit 's a possum's own night,
Frost on the bresh and the moon shines bright.

Lope along, Buddy, the ridge-top 's nigh,
Thar they be, racing agin the sky;
Feisty old moon clouds 's left us in the dark,
Listen at the hounds and make for their bark.

Swing on the grapevine, and let her drop,
Briar bush aims for to make us stop,
Possum trees out on the bench below,
Ramicking over the limbs he 'll go.

Shin along out thar, Buddy — you 're light —
Shake her now — told you he 'd drop all right —
Look at him sull — don't hit him again —
Mauling a critter suits hounds, not men.

Homealong, boys, we 'll finish the night,
Reckon Maw 's left us a little cold bite;
Dream we 're a-running him over the stones,
Smell him a-roasting, and carve him to bones.

MAKING SORGHUM

THE INVITATION

STOP by Uncle Billy's and tell young Bill and Jane
Friday week 's the stir-off, unless hit turns to rain.
Look at yander harvest of cane we aim to reap:
We can feed you hearty, and have a sight to keep.

I 'll strip cane with Buddy, and Jim can ride ole
Sue

Around the press, and stir-off several b'ilings too.
Hit 's no job to watch her, setting round the logs,
We can sing and fiddle and Buddy 'll do his clogs.

II

THE STIR-OFF

DIP your cane in, ladies, and suck the yaller fuzz.
(You don't aim to quit, Sam, afore your pardner
does?)

Throw a few more logs on, and, Jay, set in to pick.
(Naw, good home-made sorghum can't make a body
sick!)

KINFOLKS

Strike up "Turkey Buzzard," and everybody jine.

"Old Blue Goose" is called for — you used to play hit fine.

Huh! You 're not a-leaving — the sun-ball 's skeercely down.

Stay all night? Come back, then, whenever you 're aroun'!

THE BOY

EVERYTHING 's predestined,
So the Preachers say—
Wisht I 'd been predestined
To be my brother Clay.

He 's the only man-child
Mammy ever bore.
Four of us that 's older,
Sev'ral young-uns more.

Eats with Pop and Grandsir',
While we women wait.
Has his wings and drumsticks
Waiting, if he 's late.

Rides behind with Poppy,
When he goes to mill,
Fun'ral-meetings, anywhar
Hit suits his little will.

Folks delight to sarve him,
Let him come and go,—

KINFOLKS

No! he's not so pettish,
Hit's a marvel, though.

Everything's predestined,
And hit's not so bad.
We'd 'a' been right lonesome
With nary little lad.

GRANNY GOES ELECTIONEERING

I DON'T care for the mud and rain,

My Man 's running !

Let my boots get wet a grain

When he 's running.

Folks would think hit moughty quare —

Me to jest sull round up there

And not beg votes from everywhere

With Him running.

Yes, he 's spending a right-smart

Out for Jailer.

Pine-blank have to if you start

Out for Jailer.

Young Joe Turner, in the race,

Aims to scrouge Him from His place.

Says folks crave a younger face

Out for Jailer.

Some jobs need new-fangled ways,

In the County.

KINFOLKS

Jails have been sence Ancient Days
In the County.

Rules don't differ much, Joe 'd find,
“Keep 'em safe,” and “Treat 'em kind,”
“Bring 'em to a better mind,”
For the County.

A MOTOR CYCLE PASSES DOWN HICKORY CREEK

RUNNINGEST thing that ever I seed!
Traveled my best and could n't catch it;
Nary a nag I know could match it—
Not if you gave him a right smart lead.

Over on Quicksand a-packing the mail,
Bud heerd the rider a-cussing the rocks,
'Lowed he 'd bust up if he 'd many such knocks,
'Lowed 't was the last time he 'd foller our trail.

We 'll get us one to ride yet— me an' Bud.
Pappy has allus been free with his giving
(Mineral yields us a tol'able living);
Wait till I 'm growed—we 'll get shet of that mud!

FIRE

FIRE in the night when the creek was dry,
With nary a neighbor dwelling nigh,
Only Son's wife and the babes and I.

Little ole Buddy and I worked fast,
Snatching hits prey from the fearsome blast,
Household gear of the ancient past.

The wheel whar my granny used to spin,
The marriage chest with hits kivers in,
The cradle that rocked the babes of our kin.

Son says he 'll build us a place to sleep;—
Son 's over-young to be grieving deep
That the house of the Floyds is an ashen heap.

HORSE-SWAPPING

Circuit Court has come again and boss-swapping time!

STUFFED up in the Court-House,
People set and fight,
Lawing one another
Till 'way up in the night.

Spells of sorry weather,
I 'll scrouge in by Pap;
Coal and timber cases
Beat preachers for a nap.

Mostly, though, the creek bed 's
Whar you look for me,
High as ninety riders
At a time you 'll see.

Loping down the roadway,
Racing on the sand;
Plunging through the current,
Struggling for to land.

KINFOLKS

Riders and their hosses
Have a fav'rance, too;
Some are mean or doless,
Some are sound right through.

Some ride all for glory,
Critter keen as man,
Some ride all for money
And cheat you if they can.

Pap's new Bluegrass racer
Leads the rest a mile;
Try to get *him* swapping
If you want to smile.

Wednesday he is aiming
To let me ride him out.
Watch me race them swappers
And wear the whole tribe out!

GRAVE-HOUSES

SIX grave-houses for the Durham dead,
Waiting on the judgment in their narrow bed.
There lies my father and my mother,
There lies my sister and my brother,
There lies the onliest babe I bore,
There lies my man of the days of yore.

Under the spruce-pines a level space,
Shady and peaceful, a sightly place,
Here I have waited, and spoke with my kin,
Waited long ages to enter in,
Enter in gladly to my long abode.
Lord, come quickly, — hit 's a lonesome road !

THE NEW GENERATION

I

Yes, my pappy slew your uncle,
He did so.
Seven men they lost between them,
Let 'em go !

My kin called your old great-grandsire
Hard as nails,
Said his boundaries made the trouble —
Sorry tales !

Honey, don't let pore dead ghostes
Hant us two,
Each one gets his generation,
Then he 's through.

Reckon they 've a better vision
Up above,
Reckon God A'mighty turns their
Hate to love.

THE NEW GENERATION

Honey, say we bury bygones
J'ining hands?
Make one family of the King and
Howard bands?

II

A SIGNAL-SHOT through the quivering night;
A lifted latch, and a flutter of white—
Rocky Fork is astir with flight.

Horsemen holding the crossways four;
A starlit ride to the preacher's door . . .
“Kings and Howards hev quit their War.”

A TEAMSTER EMERITUS

TEAMING hain't nowise what hit used to be
Away back yander, when the county-seat
And railroad lay apart full fifty mile'.
Nary a road but the creek-bed, or else
Rockeldy little strips scrouged off the hill,
Whar, if your critters slipped, they 'd hit the trees
Glistering in the valley far below.
Gee-oh, hit shore does tickle me a sight
To hear folks quarrel at the "Fearful Trip."
Call eighteen mile' a trip! Pore simple souls!

Proper quare loads I 've hauled, too, in my time,
Humans and stuff. . . . Bottles, eh? I might.
Thar 's several kinds of bottles that get hauled.
When I set in, I never foller'd much
Tiring my team for fancy stuff or folks.
All hereabouts we mostly ate an' wore
Things we could raise, and jest forgot the rest.
Later, when I was growed, the county growed,
And I 'd haul household plunder. . . . Window-lights,

A TEAMSTER EMERITUS

(Gee-oh! how Rocky Fork did bust them lights!)
Crackers and orange-apples, coffins and hats.

I sot most store by hauling humans, though,
And after the quare, fotched-on women came,
(That 's how we called the College Ladies then,)
Thar was a sight of passing in and out.
Fathers would come to satisfy theirselves
Their gals wa'n't sleeping in a lonelie grave;
Preachers and doctors, teachers and timber-men;
And women — old and young, puny and stout.

Times I would sull up like a possum while
The travelers would yagger to theirselves.
(Gee-oh! the brash those larned ones tolled out!)
Times I would coax 'em up to question me:
'T was then I 'd see my fun. The Scripter says,
“Answer a fool according to his folly,” so
Maybe, I gonnies, ole Solomon had a call
To be right proud of me a time or two!

Long-ago days those were. Railroads have crope
So nigh we 're main alike, us mountain folks
And level-landers. Better thataway

KINFOLKS

Fer colleges and hats and sech-like gear,
So long as humans keep their differing ways
Enough to pleasure one another some.
They might. There 's shorely signs Almighty used
More than one pattern, 'way back yander, when
He made the world and saw that hit was good.

HOSPITALITY

PUT your purse up, woman,— you 'll never need
hit here.

Lees don't foller selling a mouthful of good cheer.

We 'll not miss the chicken, nor yet the bite of cake.
(Sence my baby married I throw out half I bake!)

“Hit don't cost you nothing,” I was raised to say,
“Nothing but the promise to come again and stay.”

THE NEWEST BOY

SEEN quare folks and places
Everywhere I 've been,
But the right-down quarest
Is this school I 'm in.

Jest afore her passing
Mammy got my hand,
Not to go a-wandering
Doless through the land.

So I joined the work-school.
Allus heared folks say
If you craved high larning
They could show the way.

Gee-oh, boys, the vittles—
Cheese and rice they 'll eat,
Soup and fancy pudding,
Served us once for meat.

But I 've never foller'd
Being choosy much,

THE NEWEST BOY

What I mind is doing
Woman's work and such.

Milking cows, three times, too,
Feeding hogs and hens,
Packing water buckets—
Women's work, not men's.

Then the bells a-ringing
Every hour or so,
Like to turn me franzied
Thinking where to go.

Tell you when to study,
Tell you when to eat,
Tell you when it 's bedtime,
And when to wash your feet.

Still the big boys like it,
Never seem to go.
Reckon I could try hit
Another day or so.

GRANDSIR' VISITS THE KINDERGARTEN

TWENTY little children all in a ring,
Hitched my nag and listened at 'em sing.
Pretty little lady fotched me in to say
If they maneuvered the old-time way.

Twenty little voices singing out plain,
“Do- you-know-the-Muffin-Man-that-lives-in-
Drury-Lane?”
“Jolly is the Miller” — Jim’s favorite —
Never seed such a satisfying sight.

Forty hands a-flying — scrunching up clay,
Making paper boxes, and bead strings gay,
Painting little turkeys, black, white, and red,
Forty feet a-marching where Old Glory led.

Nary sorry faces sulling over books,
Nary crabbed teacher casting ugly looks.
Dancing round and singing, all full of joy —
Reckon we might trust 'em with pore Jim's boy?

TURNED AWAY

FIGURED clean through Ray's Third Part— seems
like I'd get to stay?

Lady said there was n't room — seems like she'd find
a way?

Told her I'd not quarrel if I had to share a bed,
Slept with our two least ones quite a spell since Maw's
been dead.

Maw was always puny and she seemed right glad to
quit,

Kept us busy — me and Pap — to mother six, a bit.
Now he's wed a woman who's clever-turned and
kind,

Sent me here to have a chance to get a larned mind.

Our old shade tree did all right to sit beneath and
read,

Now I've larned me all I can — hit's masters that
I need.

Doctoring the sick is what I aim to do some day,
I'm not needed back at home — seems like I'd get to
stay!

THE CHRISTMAS TREE UP SCUDDY

The Girl from the Settlement

“Is that the school-house right around the bend?
Look at the people! Think we’ve dolls enough?
I know there’s plenty of candy.”

The Girl Teacher

“Awful bad weather — too slick for the mules;
But I knowed you’d come . . .

You boys

Let her in to the stove, — she’s freezing.
Yon’s the tree.”

The Settlement Girl

“It’s quite the prettiest tree I’ve ever seen;
The strings of popcorn and of holly-berries.
Now if the children will run out awhile,
We’ll get the trimmings on in just a jiff,—
Santa Claus, too. . . . Oh, see that grand old man
With the white beard! Please ask him if he would.”

THE CHRISTMAS TREE UP SCUDDY

Teacher (after the tree is trimmed)

“Nary a twig but what’s all sprangaley.
Gee-oh! They shore will love the candle-lights;
They’ve learned a few little ole sorry songs
And pieces that might pleasure you, perhaps;
And Granny’ll play her ole gourd fiddle some.
Open the door. . . . No need to ring the bell.”

The Mother of a little girl with a big doll

“Yon is the first store-poppet Cindy’s had . . .
Jest an ole wooden one her daddy cyarved.
Say thank ye to the lady, now —
The cat has got her tongue; — she feels hit, jest
the same.”

An Old Lady with a black shawl

“I certainly am proud to have this shawl.
Hit favors one my granny used to wear.
I aim to put hit in the cherry chest
And be laid out in hit, all proper neat.”

A Belated Young Man who is offered a top

“Now, don’t you worry, Ma’am, a single mite;
That top’ll suit me for a keepsake fine.

KINFOLKS

I jest stopped by to watch the little chaps—
Somehow I always feel to, since the War.”

The Settlement Girl—her arms full

“ You ’re dear to give me all these lovely things.
I ’ll cook the sausage round the fire to-night,
And I ’ll munch apples as I ride along.
Thank you all—heaps—
Indeed I will come back!”

The Old Man who was Santa Claus

“ A wonderment forever hit will be—
This tree — to all us folk who witnessed hit.
Peace and Good-Will seem nigher to the yearth
A-making Merry Christmas for the babes.”

NEW CHRISTMAS

GALLOPING out on the ridge's rim,
Smashing our jugs on a hickory limb,
P'inting our guns at the sun-ball's glim,
Me and Wild Bill took Christmas.

Yon side o' Pine Top we seed a quare sight,
Troublesome school-house a-blazing with light,
Crowded with people all civil and bright—
Young uns a-taking Christmas.

Holly and ivy boughs trailing around,
Windows and postes in greenery bound,
Bush full of pretties with candle-lights crowned—
Green things a-taking Christmas.

Shepherds and kingly folk bowing so low,
Babe in hits mother's arms rocked to and fro,
Angels a-shining on humans below—
Me and Bill seed a right Christmas.

THE CRIPPLE-WOMAN

A CRIPPLE-WOMAN has a sight of time to fease and fret
With nary thing to do but watch the sun-ball rise and
set,

And nary soul a-passing by the whole enduring day.
Hit's lonesome up the holler now the lads are gone
away !

They useter lope along the trail, their beastes all a-rair,
A-shouting out the good old tunes, and shooting in
the air.

And whether they was drunk or dry, they 'd allus stop
and say,

"Well, howdy, Aunt Lucindy,—how 're you coming
on to-day?"

The maids have quit their weaving, and they 've quit
their singing, too.

'T will be a lonesome valley that they 'll be a-travel-
ing through,

And sorry help are cripples, who can only sit and pray,
"Christ, comfort maids and mothers now the lads are
gone away!"

OLD CHRISTMAS EVE

(*Night of January 5*)¹

THE elder bush is all abloom,
The cattle kneel and low,
And Christian men are praying now
The prayers of long ago.

What lads is left have quit the ways
They follered all the week,
A-drinking liquor fast and free,
And shooting up the creek.

For, spite of all their devilment,
They keep Old Christmas true,
A-setting sober round the fire,
Just like us old uns do.

¹ In the Kentucky mountains January 6 is still celebrated as Christmas. The old folks say: "Old Christmas Eve at midnight the cows kneel down and low and pray, and the elder-stalks put out a head of blossom — anybody can see that 'll stay up to look. Which proves that Old Christmas, not New Christmas, is real Christmas."

KINFOLKS

Old Christmas gives a body hairt
To bide these changing days.
Hit mought be, folks yon-side the sea
Still foller ancient ways;

Hit mought be, in the land of France,
Our lads are kneeling low,
And praying with their English kin
The prayers of long ago.

A MOUNTAIN SEAMAN

ALLUS-AGO I yearned to view the sea.
Maw had a sight of old song-ballads for
To sing us young-uns, picking out the tunes
On her old dulcimore. The one I liked
Was that that told about the Old Salt Sea,
And Ships A-Sail, and wonders of the deep.

At school I had no call to hate my books;
The master let us larn the things we craved
Ef we sot still and never pestered him.
I tuck a fancy to geography,
All full of sea,— whirlpools and reefs and tides,
Breakers and spouting rocks and far lagoons.

And when a prize—the picture of a wave,
A love-lie, lifted, silvery-green wave—
Was give, I got hit, pinned hit to a log
'Longside my bed, and then I'd lay and dream;
Dream I was clinging to hits billowy mane,
Or diving through to wonderment below.

KINFOLKS

Then come the war; and Floyd and Gabe and Jeff
Went army-ways the day we heared the news.
Me too (I 'd pass for eighteen anywheres).
But on the way we parted company.
My heart was set to be a seaman. So
We said far'well, to meet again in France.

Well, now the training 's done, and I 'm afloat,
With time to set and watch the lines of foam,
And all the colors in the sun-ball's trail.
The fellers devil me a lot, and say
I 'd best be studying about the Huns.
I 'll fight all right, come fighting time,— hit 's in
The blood of all us mountain men to fight.
But why sull round and hate, when there 's the Sea?

THE FIGHTINGEST KIN

I CERTAINLY did hate hit bad to see yore nag fall
down!

This here's the sorriest piece o' road from Clay to
Frazier town.

When Jake was home, we kep' hit up — beyond the
bound'ry-tree.

He's gone now — fighting furriners — away yon-
side the sea.

The Randalls foller fighting — what time hit comes
their way.

Thar's Paw went out with Farragut, an' fit in Mobile
Bay,

An' Gran'sir' was the fightingest of all the Randall
lot,

Britishers, Creeks, an' Greasers too — he let 'em have
it hot!

His generation had the luck — wa'n't nothing left for
mine.

That sorry Spanish tribe got licked afore I knew to
jine.

KINFOLKS

No, Sir, I 'm not begrudging Jake should have his
lawful chance.

But God! ef thar was room for me — away Some-
whar in France!

BRITISH LADY

(*The Scarlet Tanager*)

BLACKBERRY winter 's the time for birds—
Atter the days of the dogwood-blow;
Then all the wandering tribes stop by,
Breaking their way to the melting snow.

Down in a thicket of ivy-bush,
Where Big Branch dreeens into Buckeye Creek,
I lay out and mock 'em, till by and by
They 'll answer me ary time I speak.

One of 'em screams like a paint'er, and one
Favors a human pine-blank when he sings.
Rusty-coats, top-knots, and brown speckled breasts,
Yaller, blue, pieded,— all manner of wings.

British Lady 's my favorite—
If I was aiming to cast my vote—
Ramicking round so proud and free,
And preening hits gayly scarlet coat.

KINFOLKS

Britishers battled ag'in' us onct,
Back in the foolish, far-off days,
Now we 're united, as kin should be,
To master the Hun and his wicked ways.

So British Lady 's a token-like
Of the good red blood that 's in us all.
Though the Old Salt Sea must roll between,
We 'll muster out at our kinsmen's call !

THE QUILTING

WE had a quilting at Aunt Sal's to-day;
And after we had got a right smart done,
The maids set in to talk about the men
That's Over There. They'd read a bit of news,
Then snatch and giggle, and tell things right out
You'd think they'd hold for sacred. . . .
. . . If my man should write to me . . .
I have no call to name him as my man,
We walked a time or two while he told tales
About the level-land and all hits ways.
He bragged on what he'd do when he got shet
Of mountain-weariness. His eyes would shine
Jest like the sun-ball glimpsing through the beech.
He said he liked to talk to me because
I did n't court, and want to hug his neck,
The way maids do. . . . I reckon if the War
Had stayed away, we mought have wed and lived
Beside the sea. . . .
The day we heared Old Glory aimed to wave
'Longside the rest, he mustered out his kin.

KINFOLKS

(That 's right, too, — don't you think I 'm faulting
him, —

I never held with faulting folk, seems like
Things mostly happen this-a-way or that
And nary one 's to blame — Hit was to be.)
There allus have been wars, — the Scripter says
“Then shall come wars until the end of time.”
The end of time! . . . O God,
Hit 's sorry comfort to me now, now when
I want my man!

SID'S MOTHER

"Missing in Action; — Sidney Mayo"

QUIT yore wailing, Granny,

Wailing 's for the dead. —

Laywaying 'em, Sid is,

Somewhar on ahead.

Many 's the squirrel-hunting

He 'll prowl around till dark;

Squirrels and Germans, too,

Sid aims to hit his mark.

"Killed in Action, Previously Reported Missing in Action; — Sidney Mayo"

QUIT yore wailing, Granny, —

Sid hated hit so bad. -

Fled away from buryings

When jest a little lad . . .'

Six foot in his hosen,

But jest a babe to me,

Last of the Mayo men is Sid. . . .

Hit was to be.

BUD'S MOTHER

Yes, the lads are back, — what 's coming back, —
Jasper and Bill and Henry and little ole Sam,
And Simon, with his leg blowed off. And Bud!
Yes, they air changed right smart, — more than we
sensed

Jest at the first, when all we felt was pride
And wonderment, — us mother-hungry ones.
Lads that had been afore all arms and legs
Come marching homeward fine, upstanding men.
Weak-breasted, puny-eaters, some had been —
And now a body could n't fill 'em up.
Nor yet with sleep, — hit was a sight to see
Them big lads sleep till high up in the day !

All that was many a week ago, and now
They 're scattering out, — down to the level-land,
And searching jobs in cities far away.
We aimed for Bud to turn him back to school
(He was a master-hand at larning, onct).
He did set in last month with Dick and Abe,

BUD'S MOTHER

And stayed a week,—then traveled homealong.
The others stuck hit out,—Bud 'lowed that they
Was bigger men than him, (that's a quare word,—
Bud lacks a leetle-grain of six-foot high!)
He laid hit to the flies a-buzzing round,
Somehow they sot his head a-buzzing, too,
(Things "Over There," things that were best forgot.)

And now he's toiling at the public works,
Yon-side the mountain,—weary miles away.
Seemed like he hated hit right bad to go
And leave his Maw so soon. He hugged my neck
And said, "I reckon, Maw, if I can keep
My body tired, my head mought get to rest."

He'll prosper thar — Outside — hit's better so ;
Our gineration — yes, and several back —
Was jest a-rusting in these lone-lie hills,
Forgetful of our forbears' nervy ways.
And yet . . . A body gets a lonesome turn —
Hit's like a mighty landslip in the spring.
A rock pulls loose, and rock and dirt and grass
Go thundering down upon the road below.
The slip fares well — hit jines the open road —

KINFOLKS

The road whar all the world of men pass by—
But thar 's the hill. . . .

Woman, I tell you plain,
Hit shore takes all my faith to stomach Wars!

BALLADS IN PRISON

WHEN we were prison-bound in Rastatt,
We sulled around full many a day
A-mourning for our home and kinfolks
Across the far-off, watery way.

'T was then we took to singing ballets
To hearten up our sorry cheer,
And one about the Turkish Lady
My comrades allus craved to hear.

"There was a man who lived in England,
And he was of a high degree,
He became uneasily discontented,
Some far-off, furrin land to see.

"So he sailed east and he sailed west,
He sailed all over the Turkish shore,
Till he was caught and put in prison,
Never to be released any more.

"The Turk, he had one lovelie daughter,
The fairest maid you e'er did see,

KINFOLKS

She stole the keys of her father's prison
And vowed Lord Bateman she 'd set free."

Whene'er we spied the gold-haired maidens
With lovelie melting eyes of blue,
We turned beseeching looks upon them
To make those ballet words come true.

Gee-oh! They 'd nary heart among 'em
For all their looks so good and mild,
Not so much cruel-turned as doless
Down to the leastest infant child.

But while we dreamed, our comrades battled,
Smashing the Huns, line upon line ;
Then came the 'leventh of November,
And Pershing's fighters held the Rhine.

• • • • •
Last night my kinfolks held a stir-off,
And many an ancient song did raise,
And when they called for Turkish Lady,
Hit took me back to Prison Days.

UNCLE NATHE ON THE H. C. L.

. . . PRICES? . . . Woman, quit naming 'em to me,
Unless you care to hear a Christian cuss.
Good ole-style cussing 's all that suits these days.
Thar 's times I 'm minded to sit up the Branch
The balance of my years, and not go nigh
The town. Bacon in pindling little jars!
Sugar at twenty-five! And as for sech
As shoes — Dad-burn my soul — ! (thar, now, you
see? —)

I 'm proud my mammy raised me up to like
The feel of toes in t' other Mammy Earth.

. . . What makes hit thataway?

I heared a yaggering stranger down the creek
Spend his opinions *Wages* was the cause.
That mought be a true word — allus-ago
When I was snaking logs, or skelping weeds,
I foller'd working three, long, toilsome days
To see one dollar-bill. And now the lads
Make as high up as fifty-five the week.
— Toiling in smoke, though, — fur away from hills! —

KINFOLKS

I 'll tell you my true mind, made up from reading
History-books. Allus, from ancient times
To nowadays, comes sech a sorry spell
A-trailing on the heels of War. Hit 's the
Predestīned way. And so there 's naught to do,
Nary a thing, but raise you a good crap,
Sit up your Branch to see some peace, and keep
A holt on your Religion—ef you can!

GINSENG

THE War has shorely made a change in Jeems,
He used to be a mortal doless lad ;
Why, if he jest set out to shoot a bird,
And hit set in to sing, he 'd hearken till
Hit winged away, and then ride gayly home.
Not at his books, though, — he 's a master-hand
At larning; why, he never tuk a chair,
Without he had a book inside his fist.
That 's how he got into the War so quick.

Nary a grain of peace I seed those days,
Rememb'ring his onhandy way with guns.
But he come loping back at last,
Healed of his wounds, with all his arms and legs.

He 'd scarcely et when he drew up afore
The fire, and said, "Dad, let 's put in a crap —
Not corn — I 'm sickened fair of hit — and beans —
Sang is the stuff for us. Up in New York
A fellow said he 'd take hit off our hands
And both of us could make our fortunes, too.

KINFOLKS

You know the heathen set a sight of store
By sang, for charms and doctor-stuff and sech."

Quare how a thing comes out that's in the blood;
My gran'sir' foller'd sanging years afore
My time, on this same ridge of land. I've heared
Ole men pipe up the singing cries right smart.
Our land's jest pine-blank fixed to raise hit, too,
Five acres of the onliest level piece
In miles. (A body gets so mortal tired
Creeping up hills like flies upon a wall.)

Well, thar stood Jeems, a-waiting on my word.
Of course I did n't aim to say him nay,
And him jest home from France; allus did like
To devil him a bit, though, so I said,
"Eh, Jeems, how-come you drawed up sech
A notion in your head? Singing's a sight of work.
There's plenty stuff in reason for us two."

He scrouged around a bit, and then drawled out,
"Plenty for two, but sort of scant for three."

It seems as he come homealong from camp
He stopped by on the river where Sue Lee
Got her a school to teach the year he jined.

GINSENG

Gee-oh, I sartinly am glad hit 's Sue,
And not some Frenchy maid, with furrin ways.

His mother allus hoped the two would wed.
Lord, but 't will be a mighty pleasant sight —
A woman in the house again — and then,
The little trot of children of your blood
Wandering in and out the open door!

THE LOW-GROUND OF SORROW

Joyous were the days when I walked along the ridge-tops

Holding sweet communion with the prophet-men of old.

Gone is the glory of those days of exaltation,

Gone the Heavenly Vision, and my faith blows cold.

The low-ground of sorrow,

The low-ground of sorrow,

Dreary is my sojourn in the low-ground of sorrow.

Grave-houses shelter the lads who walked the ridge-tops,

Grave-houses far away across the waving sea.

Where is the World Peace their blood was shed to 'stablish?

Buried with other things too beautiful to be.

The low-ground of sorrow,

The low-ground of sorrow,

Dreary is my sojourn in the low-ground of sorrow.

THE INFARE

THEY 'VE crossed ole Powder Gap by now—
My son and my son's fair bride—
Their nags a-loping homealong,
Ten waiters by their side.

The Infare-feast is spread within
Fitten the pains we spent—
And nothing lacks of food and drink
For proper merriment.

There 's merry-makers, too, rid in
From all the creeks and knolls;
I never knew the Johnson tribe
Boasted so many souls.

From out Virginny way she comes—
A race that 's proud and free—
Her brother was Son's fighting-mate,
And sleeps yon-side the sea.

KINFOLKS

God send her many a stalwart son
To witness to his deeds.

There lives no furrin war can quench
The Wayne and Johnson breeds.

UNDER THE SYCAMORE TREE

UNDER the pieded sycamore tree,
While the sun-ball 's drapping low,
I sit, with my turkey-feather fan
A-waving to and fro,
And my recollection wandering back
To the days of long ago.

Days like the little sycamore balls
That all of a favorance be,
Weaving and baking, turn about,
Jest as hit suited me—
(Maid and mother and granny too
I 've fared amazing free.)

Days like the gnurly sycamore trunk,
Weather-bitten and torn—
The day when they battled at Middle Forks
And slaughtered my eldest born,
And yesternoon, when the word from France
Gave us a man to mourn.

KINFOLKS

Days that are evil and days that are good
The Lord God doth decree,
But the thought of the days that will foller on
Is what makes cheer for me;
The thought of the hosts of my blood that shall
sit
Under the sycamore tree.

BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY



3 9999 09774 495 5

